



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/PRIVACY ACTS SECTION

Subject:

MARY HARDY REESER

FILE : 95-HQ-41192



Box 146
City of St. Petersburg, Florida.

Box 146
City of St. Petersburg, Florida.

In Duplicate

John Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.

July 7, 1951

Attention: Laboratory

Dear Mr. Hoover:

At 8:07 a.m., Monday, July 2, 1951, we received report of a fire in apartment at 40 Cherry Street, North East. MRS. MARY HARDY REESER was burned to death; cause of is not known. See diagram of apartment, attached.

The body of MRS. REESER was partially cremated with the exception of the left foot which was burned completely in two, about 4" above the ankle. Shoe as had been worn on left foot by the deceased was still intact. The chair in which she had been sitting was completely burned away, leaving just the springs. A small end table was completely burned with the exception of 2 legs. The carpet was burned in an area of approximately 3 ft.

The apartment showed signs of extreme heat on the ceilings, walls approximately 4 ft. from the floor. Plastic light switches had melted but floor plugs were unharmed. An electric clock stopped at 4:20 a.m.

MRS. REESER is described as wf, 67, 5'7, 170#. 34 7-10-51 12/1

When last seen, at approximately 8 p.m. Sunday night, July 1, 1951, she was wearing a Van Healte rayon acetate night-gown with a stocking weave. Her black rayon house coat could not be found.

Under separate cover, via RAILWAY EXPRESS, we are forwarding the following exhibits:

- Exhibit I Glass fragments found in ashes
- Exhibit II 6 small objects thought to be teeth
- Exhibit III Metal from near body
- Exhibit IV Fibers thought to be part of night-gown
- Exhibit V Particles of bones found in ashes
- Exhibit VI Charred fabric thought to be from chair
- Exhibit VII Cotton material from chair
- Exhibit VIII Charred wood
- Exhibit IX Charred legs from end table
- Exhibit X Charred fabric from rug
- Exhibit XI Unburned section of rug, heavily soaked with greasy substance
- Exhibit XII Rest of ashes
- Exhibit XIII Shoe from feet not consumed by fire.
- Exhibit XIV Chair springs

SE-28

41192-

JUL 9 1951
18 13

Page 2 - To: John Edgar Hoover, FBI
From: FD, St. Petersburg, Fla., July 7, 1951
Subj: MRS. MARY HARRY REESER - Burned to Death in Mysterious Fire

109794

Examination requested:

1. Examine glass in Exhibit I to determine if any of the glass is part of bottle or container that might have contained a substance that would cause fire to burn with such intense heat. Determine heat necessary to soften glass to cause it to assume shape.
2. Examine small objects in Exhibit II to see if they are human teeth. If so, what heat would be necessary to destroy them to their present condition.
3. Examine metal in Exhibit III to see if it is lead, such as might be in a Hearing Aid or if from a lead acid container.
4. Examine fibers in Exhibit IV to see if they are from night-gown, etc. Night-gown is supposed to be rayon acetate combination.
5. Examine particles of bone in Exhibit V to ascertain the presence of any foreign substance that might have been used to start fire and maintain heat.
6. Examine articles in Exhibits VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X, also XII and XIV, for presence of any acid, or other substances that might have been used to start a fire or used to maintain intense heat.
7. Examine section of rug, Exhibit XI, and shoe, Exhibit XIII, to ascertain greasy substance which saturates same.
8. Any other test that might explain the almost complete destruction of a human body.

We also request any information or theories that could explain how a human body could be so destroyed and the fire confined to such a small area and so little damage done to the structure of the building and the furniture in the room not even scorched or damaged by smoke.

Photographs enclosed.

Labels from ^{duplicate} chair enclosed in which remains of MRS. REESER found.

This evidence has not been examined by any other Examiner, nor will it be.

Yours very truly,

J. E. Reichert, Chief of Police

Encls.

b7c

95-41192-1

J. R. KENNEDY
and
Chief of Police

POLICE DEPARTMENT
Box 126
City of St. Petersburg, Florida.

In Duplicate

July 7, 1951

109795

John Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.

Attention: Laboratory

42-62
3e-62
413-
115
PC-30284

Dear Mr. Hoover:

At 8:07 a.m., Monday, July 2, 1951, we received report of a fire in apartment at Cherry Street, North East. MRS. MARY MARY KESSE was burned to death; cause of fire not known. See diagram of apartment, attached.

The body of MRS. KESSE was partially cremated with the exception of the left foot which was burned completely in two, about 2" above the ankle. Shoe as had been worn on left foot by the deceased was still intact. The chair in which she had been sitting was completely burned away, leaving just the springs. A small end table was completely burned with the exception of 2 legs. The carpet was burned in an area of approximately 3 ft.

The apartment showed signs of extreme heat on the ceilings, walls approximately 4 ft. from the floor. Plastic light switches had melted but floor plugs were unharmed. An electric clock stopped at 4:20 a.m.

MRS. KESSE is described as w, 47, 5'7, 170#.

When last seen, at approximately 8 p.m. Sunday night, July 1, 1951, she was wearing a Van Hecke rayon acetate night-gown with a stocking weave. Her black rayon house coat could not be found.

Under separate cover, via RAILWAY EXPRESS, we are forwarding the following exhibits:

- Q Exhibit I Glass fragments found in ashes
- Q Exhibit II 6 small objects thought to be teeth
- Q Exhibit III Metal from near body
- Q Exhibit IV Fibers thought to be part of night-gown
- Q Exhibit V Particles of bones found in ashes
- Q Exhibit VI Charred fabric thought to be from chair
- Q Exhibit VII Cotton material from chair
- Q Exhibit VIII Charred wood
- Q Exhibit IX Charred legs from chair
- Q Exhibit X Unburned section of rug, heavily soaked with
- Q Exhibit XI Part of ashes
- Q Exhibit XII Shoe from foot not consumed by fire
- Q Exhibit XIII Chair springs

Page 2 - To: John Edgar Hoover, FBI
From: FD, St. Petersburg, Fla., July 7, 1951
Subj: MRS. MARY MARIE REESER - Burned to Death in Mysterious Fire

109796

Examination requested:

1. Examine glass in Exhibit I to determine if any of the glass is part of bottle or container that might have contained a substance that would cause fire to burn with such intense heat. Determine heat necessary to soften glass to cause it to assume shape.
2. Examine small objects in Exhibit II to see if they are human teeth. If so, what heat would be necessary to destroy them to their present condition.
3. Examine metal in Exhibit III to see if it is lead, such as might be in a Hearing Aid or if from a lead acid container.
4. Examine fibers in Exhibit IV to see if they are from night-gum, etc. Night-gum is supposed to be rayon acetate combination.
5. Examine particles of bone in Exhibit V to ascertain the presence of any foreign substance that might have been used to start fire and maintain heat.
6. Examine articles in Exhibits VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X, also XII and XIV, for presence of any acid, or other substances that might have been used to start a fire or used to maintain intense heat.
7. Examine section of rug, Exhibit XI, and shoe, Exhibit XIII, to ascertain greasy substance which saturates same.
8. Any other test that might explain the almost complete destruction of a human body.

We also request any information or theories that could explain how a human body could be so destroyed and the fire confined to such a small area and so little damage done to the structure of the building and the furniture in the room not even scorched or damaged by smoke.

Photographs enclosed.

duplicate
Labels from chair enclosed in which remains of MRS. REESER found.

This evidence has not been examined by any other Examiner, nor will it be.

Yours very truly,

J. E. Ketchum, Chief of FBI

Encls.

REPORT
of the

7-1a



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON D. C.

To: Mr. J. R. Reichert
Chief of Police
St. Petersburg, Florida

July 11, 1951

There follows the report of the FBI Laboratory on the examination of evidence received from your department.

This examination has been made with the understanding that the evidence is connected with an official investigation of a criminal matter and that the Laboratory report will be used for official purposes only, related to the investigation or a subsequent criminal prosecution. Authorization cannot be granted for the use of the Laboratory report in connection with a civil proceeding.

J. Edgar Hoover
John Edgar Hoover, Director

Re: Mrs. MARK HARDY REESER, Deceased
Burned to Death in Apartment
1200 Cherry Street

YOUR FILE NO.

FBI FILE NO.

RECORDED #06

95-11172 - 1

PC-30504 CC

Examination requested by:

Addressess

EX-62

Reference:

Letter dated July 7, 1951

Examination requested:

Chemical Analyses - Miscellaneous - Microscopic Analyses

Specimens:

- Q1 Glass fragments found in ashes
- Q2 Six small objects believed to be teeth
- Q3 Metal from near body
- Q4 Fibers believed to be part of nightgown
- Q5 Particles of bones found in ashes
- Q6 Charred fabric believed to be from chair
- Q7 Cotton material from chair
- Q8 Charred wood
- Q9 Charred legs from end table
- Q10 Charred fabric from rug
- Q11 Unburned section of rug heavily soaked with grease
- Q12 Remainder of ashes
- Q13 Shoe from foot not consumed by fire
- Q14 Chair springs

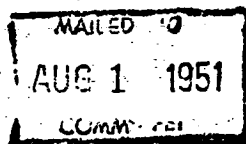
Enclosure

1-Miami

JLG:ewh

PAGE 1

86 AUG 6 1951



31 5 02 PM '51

15 11 30 PM '51

RECEIVED - HAVARD

RECEIVED - HAVARD

RECEIVED - NY 1000

JUL 35 11 10 AM '51

(continued next page)

RESULTS OF EXAMINATION:

An examination of ^{the} specimens (Q1 through Q14) showed the presence of no oxidizing chemicals, petroleum hydrocarbons or other volatile fluids commonly used as accelerants, or any chemical substances used to initiate or accelerate combustion. The greasy substance which saturated several of these specimens, such as Q11 and Q13, was found to be human fat. The absence of any traces of volatile inflammable fluids does not preclude, of course, the possibility that such fluids were used in destroying the body of the deceased. Because of their very nature, gasoline, ether, and similar inflammable fluids are consumed ordinarily in the early stages of a fire. Where there has been almost complete combustion, as in this case, it would be most unlikely to find such fluids even though they had been present at the beginning of the fire.

As regards the destruction of the deceased's body which occurred in this case it is entirely possible that the body was consumed to the extent shown in the photographs and as indicated by the bone fragments and other debris without the aid of any such material as gasoline. It is not generally realized the extent to which the human body can burn once it becomes ignited. While such cases are not common, there are on record numerous instances of bodies burning with almost complete destruction. It was formerly believed that such cases arose from spontaneous combustion or the burning was sometimes attributed to preternatural causes. There is, however, absolutely no evidence from any of the cases on record to show that burning of this nature occurs other than when the body is ignited by some external means. The unusual aspects of such cases of burning have been heightened by the fact that in many instances little damage from burning occurred in the room or area directly surrounding the victim. As in this case, the remains of the victim were found reclining in the wreckage of a chair, sofa, bed or in one instance sitting on a stairway. In the last-named case the victim was a woman who had been clad in rather voluminous garments. Not a vestige of clothing was found remaining in that case although no extensive damage was done to the stairs.

As indicated above, these cases are explained by the fact that the body becomes ignited from some outside cause such as burning clothing, a burning mattress, chair or other means. Once the body starts to burn there is enough fat and other inflammable substances to permit varying amounts of destruction to take place. Sometimes this destruction by burning will proceed to a degree which results in almost complete combustion of the body.

In this case, the absence of any scorching or damage to furniture in the room can only be explained by the fact that heat liberated by the burning body had a tendency to rise and formed a layer of hot air which never came in contact with the furnishings on a lower level. This situation would have occurred particularly if the fire had smoldered rather than burned freely.

The distorted pieces of glass in specimen Q1 were found to soften in the vicinity of 1000 to 1100 degrees Fahrenheit. This temperature corresponds to a bright red heat.

All of the objects in specimen Q2 are the remains of human teeth with the exception of one object which appeared to be an artificial tooth or part of a denture.

The composition of specimen Q3 does not indicate that this specimen is from a lead storage battery. A portion of a cigarette lighter was found in specimen Q3 and the remaining metal in this specimen could also be from a lighter. The melted metal in specimen Q3 corresponded in composition to white metal. In this connection white metal could be used as the case for a hearing aid. No portions of a battery were found in specimen Q3.

The two fragments of burned fabric composing specimen Q4 were found to be of different composition. The larger fragment is made of cotton and was woven with a plain weave. The smaller piece is not cotton but it was also woven with a plain weave. This piece was so badly charred that the type of fabric could not be determined.

There is attached hereto a copy of a communication received from [REDACTED] concerning this case. A copy of our reply to [REDACTED] is also enclosed. b7c

All of the evidence, Q1 through Q11, and the enclosures, except the photographs, are being returned to you under separate cover by railway express collect. The photographs have been retained in the Bureau's files. In the event you wish to have these photographs returned, please advise us and they will be forwarded to you immediately. The labels from the duplicate chair which were stated to be an enclosure were not received with the above-referenced communication.

7-26a

ce of Contents from
BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Re: Mrs. MARY HARDY REISSER, Deceased
Burned to Death in Apartment
1200 Cherry Street

Date July 31, 1951 Case References

Consigned Mr. J. R. Reichert
Chief of Police
St. Petersburg, Florida

List of Contents

PC-30584 CC

Mr. Harbo, 7626
Mr. Conrad, 7142

95-41192 -- Q1 through Q14 and enclosures (except photographs)

RAILWAY EXPRESS COLLECT

8
352
95-41192-
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: Mail Room, place date of shipment and registry number; Shipping Room, show date of shipment and initial this invoice; then return it to person whose name is checked in column at right. After this checked name has been initialled, invoice should be placed in administrative file.

RECORDED: 7-13-51

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

7-2

b7c

Laboratory Work Sheet

WFO
+ 2
X 1 7-25
✓

Re: Mrs. MARY HARDY REESER, Deceased
Burned to Death in Apartment
1200 Cherry Street

File # 95-41192 -1
Lab. # PC-30584 CC GX CW

copy to Miami F.O.

Examination requested by: J. R. Reichert, Chief of Police, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Date of reference communication: Let. 7-7-51.

Date received: 7-10-51

b7c

Examination requested: Chemical Analyses (General - Biochemical) Miscellaneous
Micro. Analyses (metallurgical)

Result of Examination:

Examination by: [REDACTED]

b7c

Q1 softens @ 1000-1100°F
Q2 Identified as teeth by [REDACTED] - Smithsonian
(one is plastic piece of denture)
Q1-14 No traces of accelerants, oxidizing agents etc.
Specimens submitted for examination

7/25/51
jcy

- Q1 Glass fragments found in ashes
- Q2 Six small objects believed to be teeth
- Q3 Metal from near body
- Q4 Fibers believed to be part of nightgown
- Q5 Particles of bones found in ashes
- Q6 Charred fabric believed to be from chair
- Q7 Cotton material from chair
- Q8 Charred wood
- Q9 Charred legs from end table
- Q10 Charred fabric from rug
- Q11 Unburned section of rug, heavily soaked with greasy substance
- Q12 Remainder of ashes
- Q13 Shoe from foot not consumed by fire
- Q14 Chair springs

Q6, 7, etc extracted with petroleum ether, human fat only found present.

b2

Laboratory Work Sheet

Re: Mrs. MARY HARDY EESER, Deceased
Burned to Death in Apartment
1200 Cherry Street

File # 95-41192 - 1 ✓
Lab. # PC-30584 CG OK CW

Examination requested by: J. R. Reichert, Chief of Police, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Date of reference communication: L.t. 7-7-51

Date received: 7-10-51

Examination requested: Chemical Analyses (General - Microchemical) Miscellaneous
Micro. Analyses (metallurgical)

Result of Examination:

Examination by: [redacted] 2.2. 7

Metal constituting Q3 does not appear to be from a lead storage battery. In Q3 is a portion of a cigarette lighter and the ^{other} metal in this specimen which had melted could have been also from a lighter, i.e., the lower portion, not from a lead acid container. Melted metal could also be from a case of a hearing aid if it was made from a white metal.

- Specimens submitted for examination
- Q1 Glass fragments found in ashes
 - Q2 Six small objects believed to be teeth similar to the white metal in Q3.
 - Q3 Metal from near body
 - Q4 Fibers believed to be part of nightgown
 - Q5 Particles of bones found in ashes
 - Q6 Charred fabric believed to be from chair
 - Q7 Cotton material from chair
 - Q8 Charred wood
 - Q9 Charred legs from end table
 - Q10 Charred fabric from rug
 - Q11 Unburned section of rug, heavily soaked with greasy substance
 - Q12 Remainder of ashes
 - Q13 Shoe from boot not consumed by fire
 - Q14 Chair springs
- No portions of a battery were in Q3.

7-25-51

Q3 contains a portion of what appears to be the top part of a cigarette lighter and a number of pieces of white metal which were melted and then solidified against some relatively flat surface. Metal is dirty appearing on outside.

2x10 spectrum analysis plate #1.

53 - SCALE

50 - C CONTROL

47 - FE ARC 5 SECS.

44 - Q3#1 35 SECS., MEDIUM ARC.

41 - Q3#2 " " " "

38 - FE ARC 5 SECS.

35 - Q3#3 35 SECS., MED. ARC

32 - Q3#4 " " " "

29 - FE ARC 5 SECS.

⁺⁺Pb, ⁺⁺Sn, ⁺⁺Sb, ⁺Cu, ⁺As,
⁺Ni, ⁺Ag, ⁺Fe, ⁺Si, ⁺Mg, ⁺Si.

Storage battery lead
is an antimonial
lead containing 7-12%
antimony and frequently
14% Sn. Hence NON-IDENT
ON STORAGE BATTERY
LEAD. Could be from
a cigarette lighter
entirely. Not from
a lead acid container.

Dict:

The two fragments of burned fabric composing Specimen Q4 were found to be of different composition.

The larger fragment is made of cotton and was woven with a plain weave. The smaller piece is not cotton but it was also woven with a plain weave. This piece was so badly charred that the type of fiber could not be determined.

RECORDED: 7-13-51

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

7-2

b7c

Laboratory Work Sheet

Re: Mrs. MARY HARDY REESER, Deceased
Burned to Death in Apartment
1200 Cherry Street

File # 95-41192 -1
Lab. # PC-30584 CC GX CW

Examination requested by: J. R. Reichert, Chief of Police, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Date of reference communication: Let. 7-7-51

Date received: 7-10-51

Examination requested: Chemical Analyses (General - Biochemical) Miscellaneous
Micro. Analyses (metallurgical)

Result of Examination:

Examination by: [redacted] *AB* b7c

Specimens submitted for examination

- Q1 Glass fragments found in ashes
- Q2 Six small objects believed to be teeth
- Q3 Metal from near body
- Q4 Fibers believed to be part of nightgown
- Q5 Particles of bones found in ashes
- Q6 Charred fabric believed to be from chair
- Q7 Cotton material from chair
- Q8 Charred wood
- Q9 Charred legs from end table
- Q10 Charred fabric from rug
- Q11 Unburned section of rug, heavily soaked with greasy substance
- Q12 Remains of ashes
- Q13 Shoe from boot not consumed by fire
- Q14 Chair springs

Q4- 2 frags. both plain weave -
larger frag - cotton
smaller frag - not cotton but too badly charred for ident.

REC'D: 7-13-51

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

7-2

b7c

Laboratory Work Sheet

g

Re: Mrs. MARY MARY REEBER, Deceased
Burned to Death in Apartment
1200 Cherry Street

File # 95-41192 -1 ✓
Lab. # 7C-30584 CC TX CN

Examination requested by: J. H. Reichert, Chief of Police, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Date of reference communication: L. t. 7-7-51

Date received: 7-10-51

b7c

Examination requested: Chemical Analyses (General - Biochemical) Miscellaneous
Micro. Analyses (metallurgical)

Result of Examination:

Examination by: [REDACTED]

b7c

Q1-H & 3 enclosures rtuf
8/25/51

OK
File

b7c

Specimens submitted for examination

- ✓ Q1 Glass fragments found in ashes
- ✓ Q2 Six small objects believed to be teeth
- ✓ Q3 Metal from near body
- ✓ Q4 Fibers believed to be part of nightgown
- ✓ Q5 Particles of bones found in ashes
- ✓ Q6 Charred fabric believed to be from chair
- ✓ Q7 Cotton material from chair
- ✓ Q8 Charred wood
- ✓ Q9 Charred legs of bed and table
- ✓ Q10 Charred fabric from rug
- ✓ Q11 Unburned material of rug, heavily soaked with greasy substance
- X Q12 Remains of shoes
- ✓ Q13 Shoe from bed, consumed by fire
- ✓ Q14 Chair springs

56 SEP 6 1951

Enclosure

HARRIS CALORIFIC SALES CO.

SPECIALISTS IN THE WELDING AND CUTTING INDUSTRY



OXY-ACETYLENE
OXY-PROPANE
OXY-NATURAL
— GAS —
WELDING
CUTTING &
HEATING
APPARATUS

1620 Linwood
Oklahoma City 6, Oklahoma
Phone 7-0223

7-7-51

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D.C.

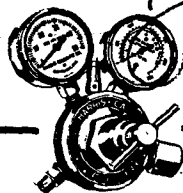
Gentlemen:

Have you considered the possibility
that an Oxy-Acetylene torch
may have been used in the
cremation of the woman in
St Petersburg, Florida? The
Oxy-Acetylene flame is one
of the hottest heats (Gas) known
to man. The soot discoloration
could easily have come from
such a flame. Hope this
thought may be of some help to
you.

RECORDED - 128 JUL 11 1951

Yours very truly

b7c



EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTORS FOR
HARRIS CALORIFIC CO. — CLEVELAND, OHIO

16

ENCLOSURE

ENCLOSURE

Cremation of Woman in Chair Has Police in Florida Baffled

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla., July 5—(AP)—Police are frankly and fully frustrated by the cremation of a 67-year-old clubwoman, both as to the cause of her death and the amazing body destruction that followed it.

Mrs. Mary Hardy Reeser was almost completely cremated in the livingroom of her apartment early this week but the room was only slightly burned although morticians say flames of 1,500 to 2,000 degrees must be applied for hours to cremate a body.

Because of the obvious intensity of the heat, police virtually have abandoned suicide and accident theories. They won't say it was murder and have no disclosed theory as to the method used if it was a slaying. Nor, if death was natural, has anyone come forward with a possible explanation of the body's destruction.

When police entered the apartment Monday morning, all that remained of the 170-pound woman was her charred skull, shrunken to the size of a teacup, a section of backbone and part of a left foot, still encased in a suede shoe. The remains were removed in a small box.

No traces of gasoline or other fuel or chemical have been found.

A theory that Mrs. Reeser might have been asleep in a cotton-stuffed chair and accidentally set fire to the chair was eliminated because such a blaze could not have produced

the intense heat which consumed the body.

While such a fierce flame was destroying the body only a small area of the rug was burned and many nearby objects weren't scorched. Some electric light switches were melted yet lower wall outlets were in working order. The doorknob was so hot that when the apartment owner discovered the tragedy Monday morning she had to summon workmen to open the door. There was a faint soot discoloration on upper walls, lower portions were unmarked.

One chemical combination under investigation as the possible agent of destruction is a formula of ether and alcohol. A panel of physicians has tested the compound and found it chars animal tissue quickly.

A sample of the body ashes and other residue from the small flame area have been sent to the FBI Washington laboratory.

Mrs. Reeser's remains will be buried Friday in Chestnut Hill cemetery, Mechanicsburg, Pa.

RECORDED - 128
INDEXED - 128

Dear,

I want you to know of my appreciation for the thought which prompted you to furnish this information.

John Edgar Hoover
Director

Tolson _____
Ladd _____
Clegg _____
Glavin _____
Nichols _____
Rosen _____
Tracy _____
Harbo _____
Belmont _____
Mohr _____
Tele. Rm. **61** _____
Nease _____
Gandy _____

MAILED 13
JUL 17 1951
COMM - FBI

RECEIVED - FEB 27



City of St. Petersburg, Florida

"THE SUNSHINE CITY"
COUNCIL-MANAGER GOVERNMENT

DIVISION OF POLICE
P. O. BOX 146



J. R. REICHERT
CHIEF OF POLICE

August 24th, 1951

y

[REDACTED] b7c
[REDACTED] b7c

J. Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

I am taking this opportunity, on the part of our entire Department, to thank you, your Laboratory and special agents in Philadelphia and those in St. Petersburg, for the valuable assistance rendered in our cremation case involving the death of MRS. MARY HARDY REESER.

This Department is very grateful for this service and if we can ever be of any assistance, at any time, do not hesitate to call upon us.

Yours very truly,

[REDACTED]

b7c
Ca

mmf
ack 8-30-51
ROK

Cc: Special Agent in Charge
Philadelphia, Penna.

Special Agent in Charge
Miami, Florida

RECORDED - 53

INDEXED - 53

SEP 8 1951

EX - 15

95-41192

95-41192-3

SEVEN
[Handwritten signature]

August 30, 1951

my
RECORDED - 53

EX - 15

95-41192-3
Detective Lieutenant [REDACTED]
Police Department
Post Office Box 148
St. Petersburg, Florida

b7c

My dear Lieutenant:

I have received your very thoughtful letter of August 24, 1951, in the case involving the death of Mrs. Mary Hardy Reeser.

You may be sure that it was a pleasure for our representatives in the field and in our FBI Laboratory to be of service to you. Please be assured that whenever we can be of further aid, we will be glad to have you call upon us.

Sincerely yours,
J. Edgar Hoover

cc - Philadelphia

cc - Miami

NOTE: The case mentioned by [REDACTED] is set
Bufile 95-41192.

RECEIVED DIRECTOR
AUG 30 1951
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE
RECEIVED - MAIL ROOM
AUG 30 1951

b7c

ROK:par:rm

15. 41 12 2 08

FBI

RECEIVED READING ROOM

- Tolson
- Ladd
- Clegg
- Glavin
- Nichols
- Rosen
- Tracy
- Harbo
- Allen
- Belmont
- Laughlin
- Mohr
- Tele. Room
- Nease
- Gandy

1379

20

COMM - FBI
AUG 31 1951
MAILED 20

VIP

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MAJ

TRUE POLICE CASES

A FAWCETT PUBLICATION

67 WEST 44TH STREET
NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

Mr. Tolson _____
Mr. Ladd _____
Mr. Nichols _____
Mr. Belmont _____
Mr. Clegg _____
Mr. Glavin _____
Mr. Harbo _____
Mr. Rosen _____
Mr. Tracy _____
Mr. Laughlin _____
Mr. Mohr _____
Tele. Room _____
Mr. Holloman _____
Miss Gandy _____

May 8, 1952

MARY HARDY REESER

Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Department of Justice
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

Although I realize that your Bureau has rendered an opinion on the cremation death of Mrs. Mary H. Reeser of St. Petersburg, Florida, I thought you might be interested in reading the enclosed letter from [REDACTED] on the subject.

The first two pages of the letter contained references to the current issue of TRUE POLICE CASES, and had no bearing on the Reeser case.

I hope that my forwarding [REDACTED] letter will in no way be an imposition on you and your Bureau.

Sincerely, [REDACTED]

jc/bw

irrational analysis
by detective story reader
5/14

ack. 5/15/52
TEB

RECORDED - 1

EX-25

195-41192-4

JUN 3 1952

478B

Before leaving California, I received a letter from [redacted] of the story about cremation of Mrs. Reeser in Florida. He went into detail concerning the matter. I was much pleased that you and [redacted] felt that any suggestion of mine merited consideration because I do wish I could be helpful in finding the person who burned her. As you probably have as much information, (not in mags), as [redacted] sent me, I will not tell you about that but I will outline for you my reply to him, which went out yesterday. b2

Nothing in the magazine story nor in the letter of [redacted] changed my mind in the least. I firmly believe she was murdered. I believe I know why and by whom but, as in many cases in court, not enough evidence is presented at this time and I fear much was destroyed by people who kept saying, "Well, I never heard of anything like it", and, goggle-eyed, let evidence get away from them. b2

It is my contention that the murderer executed a well and long planned crime but the very fact that he, or she, felt so secure, was the very fact that makes me believe a slip was made which could have been discovered in the beginning.

Because I believe you are as sincerely interested as I am, I will discuss it a bit with you. After all, you do not have to read this lengthy epistle all at once. You can take it, leave it or take it in small doses.

From the beginning, there were some small discrepancies which could not be explained easily. Of course, I am working considerably in the dark because of lack of very small details. My contention is that, in a murder case, there is nothing too small and insignificant to be noticed. I doubt if such a mind applied itself right at the beginning so much was probably lost.

Now, if the FBI stated that she burned to death by a cigarette igniting her rayon robe, then I will have lost confidence in the FBI and its infallibility. If you will recall having read of people burning to death in their homes - the fire would burn fiercely for a long time but when finally put out, a good portion of the torso of each victim would be practically intact. Also, such burnings had APPLIED heat to consume whatever portions of such bodies as were left. In other words, when the applied heat was stopped, the bodies did not continue to burn. I believe it is not possible for Mrs. Reeser to have been fat enough to burn and leave no more of herself than was left. Try firing a piece of suet, all fat, plus some lean. The suet will burn but not with enough generation of heat to consume the lean.

A woman who worked at crematorium states that bodies are continually sprayed with oil to keep them burning with heat enough to consume. Everything points to fact that APPLIED heat was put on Mrs. Reeser IF -

Now right there I always stuck. I am informed that a foot was unconsumed. I have not seen that so do not know what it looked like but I know what appearance it should have had. I am told there was a piece of liver, some spinal column bones and a thigh bone and a shrunken skull found.

Was any test made of foot to discover condition - whether from Mrs. Reeser - whether embalmed foot - whether from drugged body - etc., etc.? I venture no such examinations were ever made and they might have told much.

22 mLiver - was any test made to discover whether or not it was from a human? If so, it should have disclosed something concerning the person it was taken from.

95-34119-4
ENCLOSURE

The thigh and the spinal column should have disclosed some information. They were excellent material for disclosing height and probable weight of person from whom they were taken. Also condition of health, etc. Might even have told how long person from whom they came had been deceased.

And now we come to something I consider very odd. I have read of the shrunken skulls made by natives of another country. I read that they carefully remove skin, (which is thick) from the head bones and fill said head skin with hot sand in order to shrink same. I do not understand how a human head could be shrunken with the bones inside of it. Also, a head would be a mine of information. The features could be brought to normal, almost, and the teeth should disclose something. It was not stated whether Mrs. Reeser had false teeth or not or whether, if so, she had them in her mouth or they were found in the apartment in bathroom or elsewhere. IF false teeth were in that skull, they would tell a story; if there were no false teeth, they would also tell a story. Even if skull and features were distorted, they would still give out information. What was done about them?

And so we come to what has been my main thought? Why was there not enough odor about that apartment to attract attention of firemen when they went in to put out fire? My information states that they did not know anyone had burned until a fireman's foot slipped in something on the floor. Now, if you had ever been a housewife, you would KNOW that just a very small roast or stew of meat when burned scents the house until just a few hours will not entirely dispense with the odor of burned flesh. It is very penetrating and remains clinging to furnishings. Firemen should certainly have noticed such especially since they are supposed to be experts in the fire line and also because the fire was not great enough or fierce enough to distract their attention beyond normal. To not notice such an odor and only to discover a thing because one slipped in something on the floor and saw a human foot was such a strange thing, it kept me wondering and then the obvious hit me.

The probable reason no one noticed odor of burning flesh was because Mrs. Reeser was NOT BURNED! Only a small piece of liver and the top part of foot was scorched to give credence to what someone wanted people to believe.

23

I am forced to believe, from meager facts at hand, that Mrs. Reeser did take two regular sleeping pills which made her groggy. While in that condition, someone in whom she had confidence, came and asked her to go somewhere, or something like that, and she left. I believe this must have been under her own power because she was crippled and very heavy and would have been too much to handle if already dead, therefore she was alive but groggy from effects of sleeping tablets when she left under her own power. I believe that one who took her away, either supplied a foot resembling hers, or, after her death, cut off one of her feet, maybe because of certain deformity which could not be faked, her own foot had to be used to help establish identity. I believe part of spinal column and thigh bone and skull were put with foot and a piece of liver and THEN the fire was set to chair. Then and in that event, the fire would probably not take more than thirty minutes, if an attachment could be made to gas which was available, or even less if acetylene torch was used. It had to be an APPLIED and CONTROLLED fire in order to accomplish certain definite things but, after those things were accomplished, it could have been that other things planned were not accomplished. However, the above will explain why there was no more odor and why there was no more fire. There had to be certain things for identification of apparent victim and certainly it was not intended that the property burn down and make identification impossible. I have two theories but not enough information to work either of them out and fit the pieces exactly.

4

Take my theory that Mrs. Reeser was burned - there still had to be applied heat . But to consume her there would have to be at least three hours' heat of certain intensity. And burning flesh really leaves its odor and its unmistakable. Also, Mrs. Reeser was fat - such fat in burning would leave a greasy residue which would deposit with the smoke and be greasy to touch. Curtains, etc. would be impregnated with burned flesh odor and with greasy residue plus smoke coloring. I do not have information about this matter.

The fans just had to be going, in my opinion, because there was a very strong draft below and that is proven by two tone walls and by appearance at picture frames. The draft was beyond ordinary. Also, the fire should have created its own draft and swirls of heated air interchanging with cool air. The picture does not show such exchange as normal with such fires. On the contrary, picture shows a continuous, even, STRONG draft which reached so high and no higher.

On left upper part of wall - that is wall to left of where chair had been, there appear to be marks of two hands on smoked wall. Or could be marks of one hand applied more than once. Palm and fingers seem to be imprinted. Who made those? Were they investigated and eliminated?

yes -
by a
detect

Now about motive: I have no way of knowing anything except statements in story - I have no way of discovering other facts.

Story, and [REDACTED] letter, state that Mrs. Reeser was very despondent BEFORE she wrote for apartment where she used to live. That not having received reply, she was more despondent over that.

b7c

The picture and build of Mrs. Reeser appear to be like person who would not normally be despondent. One whom it would take much to make despondent. She seemed to be type who would pass things off with a remark, "don't like it but that's life and tomorrow is another day." Therefore, if she went out of character, there must have been something extraordinary which had happened to her life. I can only guess because of not knowing more details.

She appeared to have no one for whom she cared particularly except her son. IF something unusual would have happened between them, she would have been unusually upset emotionally because it was stated that she had come there to be near him - that she planned to secure a place even nearer his home than she then had. Instead of that, she was going away and she disappeared under strange circumstances the last night she would be likely to be in that town for some time to come.

She was supposed to be financially well fixed as was her doctor son. Beyond need financially. Therefore she had no materials wants and no reason to be despondent because of that, therefore she was much upset emotionally because of SOMEONE. It could not have been a passing acquaintance - must have been someone very near and dear to her or it would not have disturbed her tranquility so much that people were well aware of that condition.

Now, one more thought about something else. Sometimes elderly people in particular, being financially well fixed and having security in CASH, become too confiding and reveal that they have large sums of money by them. Murder follows.

24 But I still contend that the person who did the job was someone with peculiar knowledge in more ways than one. Someone who knew she would be

alone and JUST WHEN; someone who could gain access to her without suspicion of anyone; someone in whom she had utmost confidence; someone who either gave her something other than sleeping pills so she would be dead when burned or someone who had access to props, (skull, etc.) and who used such to fool people into believing she burned herself to death. It had to be someone who would profit by her death in some manner - either financially or emotionally. Elderly people can be very possessive and usurp time and attention, etc. and no way for people to do much about it.


I am informed she always took dinner at her son's a certain day. Now that might prove to be very annoying. To have even the dearest and nearest ALWAYS tying down that certain time each week, etc. No matter if she was asked, that might be form and not sincere desire for her company. Also, same as in divorce, families have, on each side, a story they tell to the world and act out BUT, in the final analysis, as in divorce, somewhere between those stories lies the REAL story and it is not the same as either side's published story although it may have facts from each in the REAL story but such real stories seldom reach the outside world but are bottled up in the emotional self of each individual until the cork pops out and one thing or another results. How tightly such things are bottled depends on the up-bringing of individuals - the tighter the bottling of emotions, the more violent the explosion when it comes.

I believe that Mrs. Reeser might have written letters or a letter to someone in whom she confided - usually each person has at least one trusted confidant OUTSIDE of immediate family because, too often, emotional upsets are family affairs. Such person as recipient would not want to talk because of publicity and natural distaste for violating confidence. But it is not only possible such written evidence of what might be about to happen does exist but very probable, in my opinion.

The fact that, in the past, she had visited in old home town would not necessarily mean she intended to do so this time UNTIL CONDITIONS became such that she felt she MUST get away. Maybe she was afraid. There is no one to tell you and maybe no one is capable of gaining confidence of those who may KNOW some little thing - like her beginning to tell something and then her eyes filling with tears or some other small incident which could be very revealing. I have always studied people - I like them and I like the study. I was a doctor (D.C., Ph.C.), for more than twenty years and I early discovered that ill people do not always become so because of cancer or other troubles of like nature. No, [REDACTED] the great majority of people are functionally upset, and they are so because of emotional upsets which cause them to eat incorrectly, sleep too little and so, on and on. In order to learn concerning such people so I could truly help them be normal, I began reading fact detective stories and have kept it up through the years. They have helped me to understand and help people all along the way and still function in that capacity.

b7c

Finally, most officers are not trained to cope with such a case as that of Mrs. Reeser and such leaves them flabbergasted because they never were chosen as officers because of their peculiar mental abilities to ferret out crime and the criminals. Rather, they were chosen politically and for brawn. Some of them because enough interested AFTER they became officers to develop their brains along detective lines and so we do have very able detectives but they are in the minority. I could tell you of a case here which passes belief of a murdered boy. Officers insist he was a suicide by hanging but, when found, his body had legs and arms drawn up and stiff in that position and there is much, much more.

 I would like to find a magazine devoted to UNSOLVED murder and other criminal cases, disappearances, etc. People like to discuss mysteries. If not a whole magazine, then at least one story in each issue of some magazine. When such a one does disappear and a magazine or newspaper plays it up, people discuss it for a long time afterwards and weeks and months afterwards, you can refer to it and people will say, "oh, yes, I remember that", and go on to recall facts. Much good might come of such.

b7c

I saw a picture in INSIDE DETECTIVE of the Reeser scene of cremation. The chair springs were there and other odds and ends. I was much impressed by the fact that Mrs. Reeser disappeared so completely and that picture seemed to show that things more readily combustible than a human body REMAINED UNBURNED. I do like two plus two to equal four, always. I can believe that the murderer set the scene so people would believe what was intended for people to believe. Therefore, after studying all the points of information I have, I can very readily believe she was not cremated but was disposed of outside of and away from that apartment and the stage set with props to make believe she sat in that chair and burned to death therein. If she would have been taken away and the fire set afterwards with props of piece of liver, some bones and A SKULL, that would come nearer making four than the statement that she burned in that chair which hardly makes sense.

Hope I have not bored you and I sincerely hope that something I may have written regarding this case will help someone to solve the puzzle. Such should have every effort made to solve it because of the after effects on criminal minds.

I will try to keep up with your magazine in the future and will look forward with pleasure to more good stories.

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely,



b7c

May 15, 1952

RECORDED - 795-41192-4

G.I.R.-6

True Police Cases
67 West 44th Street
New York 18, New York

Dear [REDACTED]

EX-25

Thank you for your letter of May 8, 1952, with enclosure.

It was indeed thoughtful of you to send me the letter of [REDACTED] concerning the cremation death of Mrs. Mary H. Reeser, and I sincerely appreciate the courtesy and interest which prompted you to do so.

Sincerely yours,

J. Edgar Hoover

NOTE: The Laboratory has advised that enclosed letter is a purely irrational analysis of the death of Mrs. Reeser.

TEB:ns:cdm

Tolson _____
Ladd _____
Nichols _____
Belmont _____
Clegg _____
Glavin _____
Harbo _____
Rosen _____
Tracy _____
Mohr _____
Tele. Rm. _____
Nease _____
Gandy _____

COMM - FBI
MAY 16 1952
MAILED 20

RECEIVED READING ROOM
FBI
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

MAY 15 7 36 PM '52

MAY 16 10 03 AM '52

U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

LIVED - DIRECTOR

62c

783

61 JUN 26 1952

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FBI LABORATORY

July 1952

Director	5633	Mr. Harbo	7625
Mr. Tolson	5744	Mr. Bowles	7601
Mr. Ladd	5736	Mr. Conrad	7140
Mr. Nichols	5640	Mr. Downing	7621
Mr. Belmont	1742	Mr. Parsons	7121
Mr. Clegg	5256	Lab. Routing	7621
Mr. Glavin	5517	Secretary	7625
Mr. Rosen	5706	Reading Rm.	5531
Mr. Tracy IB	4130		
Mr. Mohr	5744	M	
Mr. Nease	5633		
Miss Gandy	5633	See Me	

Ack without comment

J
R. T. Harbo

b7c

August 6, 1952

Mr. Jacob R. Reichert
Chief of Police
St. Petersburg, Florida

Re: Mrs. Mary Hardy Reeser-Deceased
Burned to Death in Apartment
1200 Cherry Street

My dear Chief:

On July 7, 1951, you forwarded to the FBI Laboratory numerous items of evidence for examination in this case. The results of our examination were reported to you on July 31, 1951, in Laboratory report PC-30584.

As you will recall we retained in our files the photographs of the fire scene which you forwarded to us. We are preparing some material on Laboratory aids in investigation of arson and related cases and, because of the unusual aspects of the Reeser case, would like to use several of these photographs and an account of the case for illustrative purposes.

It will be very helpful to us if you would submit a brief summary of the facts of this case and your final disposition of it. Would you also submit a copy of the apartment diagram if it is available now? Of course, no names or references will be used in our preparation of this material by which the principals may be identified. If for any reason objections exist to the use of this material, please feel free to indicate them.

Sincerely yours,

RECORDED - DIS 15
EX-28
AUG 15 1952
John Edgar Hoover
Director

RECEIVED - HVBRO

COMM - FBI
AUG 7 1952
MAILED 28

68 AUG 13 1952



City of St. Petersburg, Florida

"THE SUNSHINE CITY"
COUNCIL-MANAGER GOVERNMENT

DIVISION OF POLICE
P. O. BOX 146

August 14th, 1952



J. R. REICHERT
CHIEF OF POLICE

b7c

[REDACTED]

J. Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of August 6, relative to the case of MRS. MARY HARDY REESER, deceased, who was burned to death in apartment at 1200 Cherry St., N. E., this City.

Attached you will find copy of Special Report of the findings of our Detectives [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] which is self-explanatory.

2 copies of the [REDACTED] are also attached.

Also attached is a summary of this case as released by me on August 8, 1951, that appeared in our local newspapers, stating this was an "accident, until such time as we can prove otherwise".

We have no objections, whatever, to your using any and all evidence in your Bureau.

Yours very truly,

J. R. Reichert, Chief of Police

[Signature of J. R. Reichert]

b7c

Encls.

RECORDED - 131

195-411,927-6

AUG 19 1952

SEVEN

Letter
8-22-52
JLC/Bj

XXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXXXFEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FOIPA
DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET

14 Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

- ☒ Deletions were made pursuant to the exemptions indicated below with no segregable material available for release to you.

Section 552Section 552a☐ (b)(1)☐ (b)(7)(A)☐ (d)(5)☐ (b)(2)☐ (b)(7)(B)☐ (j)(2)☐ (b)(3)☒ (b)(7)(C)☐ (k)(1)☒ (b)(7)(D)☐ (k)(2)☐ (b)(7)(E)☐ (k)(3)☐ (b)(7)(F)☐ (k)(4)☐ (b)(4)☐ (b)(8)☐ (k)(5)☐ (b)(5)☐ (b)(9)☐ (k)(6)☐ (b)(6)☐ (k)(7)

- ☐ Information pertained only to a third party with no reference to the subject of your request or the subject of your request is listed in the title only.

- ☐ Documents originated with another Government agency(ies). These documents were referred to that agency(ies) for review and direct response to you.

_____ Pages contain information furnished by another Government agency(ies). You will be advised by the FBI as to the releasability of this information following our consultation with the other agency(ies).

_____ Page(s) withheld inasmuch as a final release determination has not been made. You will be advised as to the disposition at a later date.

_____ Pages were not considered for release as they are duplicative of _____

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- ☒ The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:
95-41192-6, enclosure

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
X Deleted Page(s) X
X No Duplication Fee X
X for this page X
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXXX

Reeser Death Accident -- Body Furnished On

Sedative, Cigarette And Acetate Gown Support FBI Theory

EXCLUSIVE

By JERRY BLIZIN

St. Petersburg's "cinder woman mystery" was officially listed as accidental death in a statement issued late yesterday afternoon by Police Chief J. R. Reichert.

Reichert, 67, whose body was destroyed July 2 in an intense blaze which did only minor damage to her apartment at 1200 Cherry Street Northeast, was closed "unless new developments arise."



REICHERT



REESER

Reichert issued a lengthy statement yesterday based on a five-page report from the FBI laboratory, which spent three weeks probing materials from the fire scene and charred bits of the

woman's body. In addition to a 500-word statement to the press, Reichert handed out a personal statement on the fire death, one of the most widely publicized local tragedies in years.

Reichert's statement follows:

"This is the most unusual case I've seen during my almost 25 years of police work in the City of St. Petersburg. Since we have had hundreds of suggestions as to how this incident may have happened, I am not closing the door on the case yet.

"We are, however, holding the case in abeyance for any other information or developments that may come to our attention. The facts in the case have been checked from every possible angle, and I feel that the facts as given provide the answer to the death of Mrs. Reeser."

No Incendiary

Basically, the FBI report boils down to one salient fact: No evidence of any incendiary material or accelerant of any nature could be found in any of the materials tested.

The report said, however, that common combustible fluids and accelerants such as ether, alcohol, gasoline, etc., would probably be consumed in such a fire and no trace of them detected afterward.

FBI analysts pointed out that the inflammability of human fatty tissue is intense, a fact little-known by most persons. Substances found in segments of the rug from the Reeser apartment were found to be melted human fat.

Police Statement

The Police Department's official statement, based on the Bureau report, is as follows:

"An examination of all specimens sent to the FBI laboratory for analysis shows no oxidizing chemicals, petroleum hydrocarbons or other volatile fluids commonly used as accelerants or any chemical substances used to initiate or accelerate combustion.

"There is conclusive evidence that the deceased body could be consumed by fire, as in this case, if the body had become ignited.

"We have had nearly 100 cases quoted in personal letters of various opinions and suggestions. In order to clarify some of these suggestions we have disregarded the theory of lightning, although there was a slight electrical disturbance on the particular night involved. There is no indication in this case where lightning struck the building in order to kill the victim and set the body afire. In most cases lightning leaves tell-tale evidence, either of entrance or exit.

"Due to the fact Mrs. Reeser had taken a considerable amount of sedatives at night, and we do have evidence that she told her son, Dr. Richard Reeser, she had taken two second (sedative) capsules at 8 p. m. and was going to take two more, there is every possibility that Mrs. Reeser while sitting in the overstuffed chair in her apartment, could have become drowsy or fallen asleep while smoking a cigarette, thus igniting her clothes.

Inflammable Gown

"At that time she was clad in a rayon acetate nightgown and a housecoat. The nightgown, being highly inflammable, could have been ignited by a burning cigarette, causing immediate death, if the deceased was in a semi-conscious condition.

"Naturally, when her clothes became afire they would also set the chair afire creating intense heat which completely destroyed the chair and a nearby end table. Once the body became ignited, almost complete destruction occurred from the burning of its own fatty tissues. For once the body starts to burn, there is enough fat and inflammable substances to permit varying amounts of destruction to take place. Sometimes this destruction by burning will proceed to a degree which results in almost complete combustion of the body, as in this case.

"While such cases are not common, there are on record numerous instances of bodies burning with almost complete destruction. There is, however, no evidence from any of the cases on record to show that burning of this nature occurs other than when the body is ignited by some external means.

"The unusual aspects of such cases of burning have been heightened by the fact that in many instances little damage from burning occurred in the room or area directly surrounding the victim.

Fire Only Smoldered

"In this case, the absence of any scorch or damage to furniture in the room can only be explained by the fact that heat liberated by the burning body has a tendency to rise and form a layer of hot air which never came in contact with the furnishings on a lower level. This situation could have occurred, particularly if the fire had smoldered, rather than burned freely."

In effect, this summation of findings by FBI pathologists and chemists, rules out spontaneous human combustion as suggested by a Times reader and explains the "level of heat markings" found in the Reeser apartment.

At the time her body was discovered, police and firemen found a line of black smoke and soot around the upper walls of the room, with buckled electrical wall switches and melted candles, while lower down on the same walls, outlet plugs were intact and furnishings unmarked by heat.

Book Confirms Finding

Yesterday, this reporter, found confirmation for the ready burning of human fat in the book "Homicide Investigation," by Dr. LeMoyn Snyder, medico-legal director of the Michigan State Police and member of the American Medical Association and American Bar Association.

Snyder, trained both in medicine and law, states: "One would think that the human body would be very resistant to destruction by fire, but this is not actually the case. Underneath the skin is a layer of fat which may be quite thick in heavy individuals. This burns readily and the destruction of tissue after a comparatively small fire may be great. . . . In many cases it seems the destruction of tissue by burning is out of all proportion to the intensity of fire which caused it."

This would confirm what police previously discounted. It also follows a theory outlined early in the case by Dr. Richard Reeser's wife, who told The Times that her mother-in-law's own tissue probably burned after she fell asleep in the chair while smoking.

The deceased was a heavy woman, weighing about 170 pounds. When found, however, all that was recognizably human was one foot—curiously intact—and still clad in one of the black slippers Mrs. Reeser customarily wore as house shoes.

Some Loose Ends

Despite the findings of the FBI, several unexplained angles still remain:

1. No odor of fire or burning flesh was ever detected by the landlady of the apartment or neighbors.
2. No time of death has ever been established, making it impossible to determine whether the blaze burned rapidly or smoldered all night.
3. No smoke was ever detected by neighbors or workmen in the area.

REPORTER'S OPINION: "While people may discuss the



LEE

Reeser case at still greater length than has already been done, we must not overlook the tremendous amount of work poured into the baffling case by investigating officers. Police Chief Jake Reichert, Detective Lieut. Cass Burgess, Detectives R. H. Lee and Ross Boyd and others all did back-breaking



BURGESS

work. Whether the verdict convinces arm-chair sleuths or not, City police were not lax in their pursuit of answers.

Body Furnished Own Fuel

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work. Whether the verdict convinces arm-chair sleuths or not, City police were not lax in their pursuit of answers.

Reeser Background

Police and firemen found the charred remains of Mrs. Mary Hardy Reeser, 67, at 8:07 a. m., July 2 in her apartment at 1200 Cherry Street Northeast. Although little damage was evident only human remains found were a skull, shrunken to the size of a cup, a piece of backbone and an intact left foot in a satin slipper. Her overstuffed chair was destroyed except for the coil springs.

Discovery was made as a telegram was delivered for Mrs. Reeser at 8:07 a. m. and the landlady, Mrs. P. M. Carpenter, went to give it to her. Mrs. Carpenter found the door hot and summoned the aid of two painters working across the street. It was then the blackened walls were first noticed and the few remains found. Firemen were called and extinguished last embers with a hand pump.

Mrs. Carpenter, who lived in an adjoining apartment, had been up, at five a. m. and six a. m. to get her newspaper, but had not noticed anything amiss. Smoke smelled at five a. m. was thought to be coming from an overheated water pump. Mrs. Carpenter turned off the pump and went back to bed.

The Western Union boy who delivered the telegram didn't notice any smoke, despite the fact the windows were open. A Times carrier boy who delivered papers to the area earlier in the morning also noticed nothing amiss.

Mrs. Reeser was seen by her son, Dr. Richard Reeser, his wife and the landlady, Sunday night, July 1, the last time at 9 p. m.

August 22, 1952

Mr. J. R. Reichert
Chief of Police
Post Office Box 146
Saint Petersburg, Florida

75-41192-6
My dear Chief:

I have received your letter of August 14, 1952,
forwarding the material which we requested in connection with
the death of Mrs. Mary Hardy Reeser.

Your cooperation in furnishing this material to
us is greatly appreciated. May I assure you of my desire to
be of assistance to you whenever possible in matters of mutual
interest.

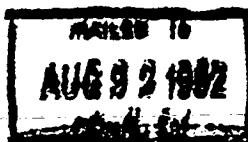
Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover
Director

95-41192

JIG:bjl

Tolson _____
Ladd _____
Clegg _____
Glavin _____
Nichols _____
Rosen _____
Tracy _____
Harbo _____
Belmont _____
Mohr _____
Tele. Room _____
Nease _____
Gandy _____



LABORATORY DIVISION

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U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE
FBI
RECEIVED

62 AUG 29 1952

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI

DATE: 10/21/52

FROM : SAC, NEWARK (95-0)

SUBJECT:

Mrs. Mary Hardy Reiser

ATTENTION: FBI LABORATORY

PACENT MAGAZINE

October, 1952 Issue

Article Entitled "The Cinder Lady"

Mrs. Mary Hardy Reiser

[REDACTED] who resides at the [REDACTED]

and is employed in the [REDACTED] appeared at the Camden Resident Agency with the magazine article set forth above and advised that after having read the article, he had typed up his own theory on the matter and wished the same to be made known to the FBI Laboratory in view of the reference made to the Laboratory in the article.

[REDACTED] advised that he had sent a copy of his theory as enclosed to the Police Dept. at St. Petersburg, Fla., as well as [REDACTED] at the University of Pennsylvania.

ENCLOSURE - 1

EXPEDITE PROCESSING

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RECORDED - 91

OCT 27 1952

INDEXED - 9

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36

ENCLOSURE

95-41192-7

ENCLOSURE

The Strange Case of THE CINDER LADY

BY DR. WILTON MARION KROGMAN
University of Pennsylvania

■ I AM A "bone detective," as well as a professor of physical anthropology. It is my special skill to identify human bones—either the whole skeleton or parts of it.

From the skeleton or its remains I can tell the age of a person at the time he died, his sex, and his race; it is also possible for me to estimate his height and body-build. From human bones I can often determine the cause of his death (the proverbial "blunt instrument," or a gunshot, or a knife, axe, cleaver or any other cutting weapon); how long the bones have been buried in the earth; and finally, if the skull is present, details about the living tissue and how the man looked.

In short, your skeleton is a dead give-away to what you were, and

who you were, during your lifetime.

I've been called in by the police and FBI to work on a number of murder and disappearance cases where only the bones were available—soft parts had decomposed, been eaten by acids or burned away.

But in 1951 I ran into a case which for sheer horror and bizarreness beat anything in my experience. The local police kept referring to it as "weird," "fantastic," "unbelievable," and even the conservative FBI ventured "unusual," "improbable." As for me, were I living in the middle ages I'd mutter something about "black magic" . . . but first let me outline the known facts.

At 9:00 P.M. on the night of July 1, 1951, Mrs. Mary Hardy

95-41192-7





Some ash, some oily soot, a foot,
and fragments of backbone . . . no
more was left of the Cinder Lady. Did
she vanish by black magic? Go
up in spontaneous combustion? Burn
in a heat hotter than hellfire?
Why was the rest of the room unscorched?
A world-famous bone detective
spins his theories after months of
research and tracking clues

Reeser, aged 67 years, and 175 pounds heavy, was last seen alive in her one room apartment, in a four-apartment building in St. Petersburg, Florida. Mrs. Reeser was the widow of a doctor who had practiced near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the heart of the "Pennsylvania Dutch" region.

On the fatal night she and her landlady were the only people in the building. The last time anyone saw her, Mrs. Reeser was sitting in an over-stuffed chair, a bit off the center of the room, wearing a rayon acetate nightgown and a housecoat. She was smoking a cigarette. She was known to take several sleeping tablets before retiring. The room was of moderate size with a couple of windows.

At 8:00 A.M. next morning, the landlady took a telegram up to Mrs. Reeser's room. She grasped the doorknob but found it too flaming hot to hold. Two painters working in the building forced the door and were met by a blast of hot air. Their startled gazes met a scene macabre beyond words:

1) The walls from a level of about four feet above the floor, and the ceiling, were festooned with a greasy soot which gave off a "peculiar odor";

2) Where Mrs. Reeser had been sitting were only ashed and charred remains. They included a roundish object identified as the head, and variously described as big as a "baseball," or a "teacup" or a "grapefruit"; a few pieces of back-

bone; a lump of charred tissue tentatively identified as liver; her left foot, with skin unburned and still shod in an unscorched black satin bedroom slipper; and the heat-eroded coil-springs of the chair;

3) The windows were partly open and the door was not sealed;

4) The wall paint nearest to the chair, and the floor in the immediate vicinity, was only slightly scorched;

5) Electric light plugs and fixtures in the soot area on the walls had melted, but base-plugs lower down had not; no fuses had been blown and the electric current was on, and working;

6) Two candles standing on the window sill had melted but curiously their wicks were intact;

7) Newspapers on a nearby table were not scorched and neither was the bedding on a day bed;

8) An electric clock had stopped at 4:20 (presumably A.M.), but when plugged in at the baseboards it ran O.K.;

9) There was absolutely no evidence of any inflammable materials (kerosene, gasoline, etc.) at or near the site of burning;

10) While the room was intensely hot, there were no flames, no embers, no collection of sticky or viscous material on the site;

11) There is no record, during the night, of any smoke, any heat-crackle, or any nauseous or unusual odor escaping from the room.

As I mentioned earlier I've worked on a number of human burning cases. To understand what happens to the human body, I've done some experimentation using both animal and human cadavers. I've burned bones still encased in

flesh; I've burned "green" bones—bones stripped of flesh, but not dried out; I've burned dried bones. I've used all sorts of combustibles, ranging from a hickory and oak fire (said to be the hottest "natural" fire), through coal, oil, gasoline, to an electric muffle furnace. I carefully observe how the bone behaves during burning and how it looks when it has cooled off.

As a result I have formulated a basic principle: *"The destruction of animal or human tissue is a function of the conditions of combustion, rather than of the type of combustible used."* By this I mean that without a brisk draft (the free passage of air) the fire will be smothered, no matter how inflammable the combustible used.

What earthly circumstances and causes could have led to such complete destruction of Mrs. Reeser? Lightning? Local Weather Bureau records showed that no storm had occurred on the night of July 1. Could it have been an electrical induction current, passing through the body, caused by faulty wiring? But I've already noted that the wiring was intact, for the electric clock ran O.K. when plugged in. Was it by spontaneous or "internal" combustion—that is, a fire starting in the body tissues *without any external cause*? But this is impossible! The fluids and fats of the human body simply do not contain the chemicals which might ignite all by themselves. Could she have perished so completely from just a dropped cigarette? Or was she burned elsewhere, then "planted" in the room? These are all "hunches," or "theories," that occurred to the local police, and to me a few weeks later

after I had entered into the case.

As I pondered this case the chords of memory began to hum a recognizable tune and I went to the library—I just knew that this was not an entirely unfamiliar scene. I found my answer in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, Chapter 32. Mr. Guppy and Mr. Weevle are waiting to meet Mr. Krook.

"Mr. Guppy happens to look at his coat-sleeve. He stares at it, aghast [and says]:

"Why, Tony, what on earth is going on in this house tonight? Is there a chimney on fire? See how this soot's falling. See here, on my arm! Confound the stuff, it won't blow off—smears, like black fat!"

At the appointed hour they enter Mr. Krook's room together.

"The cat has retreated close (to the door) and stands snarling—not at them; at something on the ground before the fire. There is very little fire left in the grate, but there is a smouldering, suffocating vapour in the room, and a dark greasy coating on the walls and ceiling. The chairs and table, and the bottle so rarely absent from the table, all stand as usual.

"Here is a small burnt patch of flooring; here is the tinder from a little bundle of burnt paper, seeming to be steeped in something . . . O Horror, he is here! . . .

"Call this death by any name you will, it is the same death eternally—inborn, inbred, engendered in the corrupted humours of the body itself—Spontaneous Combustion."

The foregoing theory is stoutly defended as fact by Dickens in the 1853 Preface to the first edition of *Bleak House*. He avers "that there are about 30 cases on record, of

which the most famous, that of the Countess Cornelia de Baudi Cese-nate, was minutely investigated . . ."

I searched further. I found that an English magazine, *The Saturday Magazine*, in August, 1832, ran an article called "Fire in the Human Body." It described the burning in 1731 of the lady cited by Dickens.

"This lady, who was in the sixty-second year of her age, retired to bed in her usual health. Here she spent above three hours in conversation with her maid, and in saying her prayers; and having at last fallen asleep, the door of her chamber was shut. As her maid was not summoned at the usual hour, she went into the bedroom to wake her mistress; but receiving no answer, she opened the window, and saw her corpse on the floor, in the most dreadful condition. At the distance of four feet from the bed there was a heap of ashes. Her legs, with stockings on, remained untouched, and the head, half-burned, lay between them. Nearly all the rest of the body was reduced to ashes. The air in the room was charged with floating soot. A small oil lamp on the floor was covered with ashes, but had no oil in it; and in two candlesticks, which stood upright upon a table, the cotton wick of both the candles was left, and the tallow of both had disappeared. It has been generally supposed that an internal combustion had taken place; that the lady had risen from her bed to cool herself, and that, in her way to open the window, the combustion had overpowered her, and consumed her body by a process in which no flame was produced."

I found that in 1763 the *Annual Register of the Royal Society of*

London reported the case of an elderly woman, gin-sodden, who was put to bed by a friend at 11:00 P.M. At 5:30 A.M. on the following morning smoke was seen coming out of the window; a small fire, easily put out, was on the floor. The body was badly burned, though "one leg and a thigh were still entire." It was said, "the people were amazed that the furniture had sustained so little injury . . . the feather-bed, the clothes, and covering were safe." In the room "the walls and everything in it were blackened"; the room "was filled with a very disagreeable vapour . . ."

I've presented pertinent detail in these cases (and there are many more) not so much to support theories of spontaneous or internal combustion—which are wholly untenable—as to point out an ever-recurring pattern:

1) The victim is usually a woman, in her 50's or 60's, of corpulent build;

2) The victim was addicted to a habit which induced helplessness (drink) or unconsciousness (a drug);

3) She was in the habit of smoking (pipe or cigarette) upon retiring; the burning occurred at night; the victim more than once fell asleep in a chair;

4) A candle (or candles) was in the room; the candle-substance was melted, but the wick was intact;

5) The burned (charred or ashed) remains were found on the floor, often near the room's center;

6) The main mass of the body was completely consumed, but head and extremities (hands, feet, fingers, toes) and occasionally vertebrae were often untouched;

7) The floor at the site of the burning showed some charring, but surrounding furniture, clothes and walls were unmarked;

8) The air was charged with oily or greasy soot and walls and ceiling were covered by this soot;

9) Often the residue (of bones or tissue) was oily and odorous.

I now want to point out some very serious problems—problems which strain belief beyond the breaking point.

First, and foremost, it takes a terrific heat to completely consume a human body (and I mean soft tissues plus skeleton). I have watched, in a crematorium, a body burn at 2000° F. for over eight hours—burn under the best possible conditions, with both the means of combustion (a furnace with excellent draft) and type of combustible (gas or oil). At the end of that time there was scarcely a bone that was not present and completely recognizable as a human bone. It was not ashed or "powdered." Only at 3000° F., plus, have I seen bone fuse—or melt, so that it ran and became volatile. These are very great heats—they would sear, char, scorch, or otherwise mar or effect anything and everything within a considerable radius.

Secondly, in my experience the human head is not left intact in such burning cases. Certainly it does not "shriveled," or symmetrically reduce, to a much smaller size. In the presence of heat sufficient to destroy soft tissues the skull explodes, literally, into many pieces.

Finally, I pose less tangible problems. The body is over 90 per cent water—perhaps even a little more in very fat people. I find it hard to

believe that a human body, once ignited, will literally consume itself—burn itself out, as does a candlewick, guttering in the last residual pool of melted wax. When human flesh burns it gives off an acrid, evil-smelling odor, especially if burning free in a room or in the open. How could 175 pounds of mortal flesh burn with no detectable or discernible smoke or odor permeating the entire building?

Just what *did* happen on the night of July 1, 1951, in St. Petersburg, Florida? We may never know, though the case still haunts me. The "Cinder Lady" is now part of our folklore. It couldn't happen, but it did. That's the way the St. Petersburg police and I felt about it. Police Chief J. R. Reichert issued a statement six weeks after the burning, as follows:

"According to her son, Mrs. Reeser habitually took two sleeping pills before retiring. There is every possibility that, while seated in the over-stuffed chair, she became drowsy or fell asleep while smoking a cigarette, thus igniting her clothes.

"At that time she was clad in a

rayon acetate nightgown and a housecoat (according to her son, who had visited her the evening of July 1). The nightgown, being highly inflammable, could have been ignited by the cigarette, burst into flame, causing almost immediate death to a person in a semi-conscious condition.

"Once the body became ignited, almost complete destruction could have resulted from the burning of its own fatty tissues (Mrs. Reeser was a heavy woman, weighing 175 pounds), an uncommon but entirely possible occurrence according to FBI analysis.

"In this case, the absence of any scorch or damage to furniture in the room can only be explained by the theory that heat liberated by the burning body rose to form a layer of hot air which darkened the upper walls and ceiling of the room but never came in contact with walls or objects at a lower level."

Logical and scientific as this sounds, he came closer to truth when he concluded, "The case is not closed and may never be to the satisfaction of all concerned." ■■

SEAT OF LEARNING



■ TOMMY WAS AT HIS FATHER'S SIDE. "Daddy," he asked, "what was the name of the great American traitor in the Revolutionary War?"

"I don't know," replied his father.

"Who was Vice President under Harding?"

"Gosh, I forget."

"Well, then," Tommy tried again, "do you know where Monticello is?"

"No," replied his father, after a moment's deliberation.

"Gee, Pop," said the boy, "you don't mind my asking you, do you?"

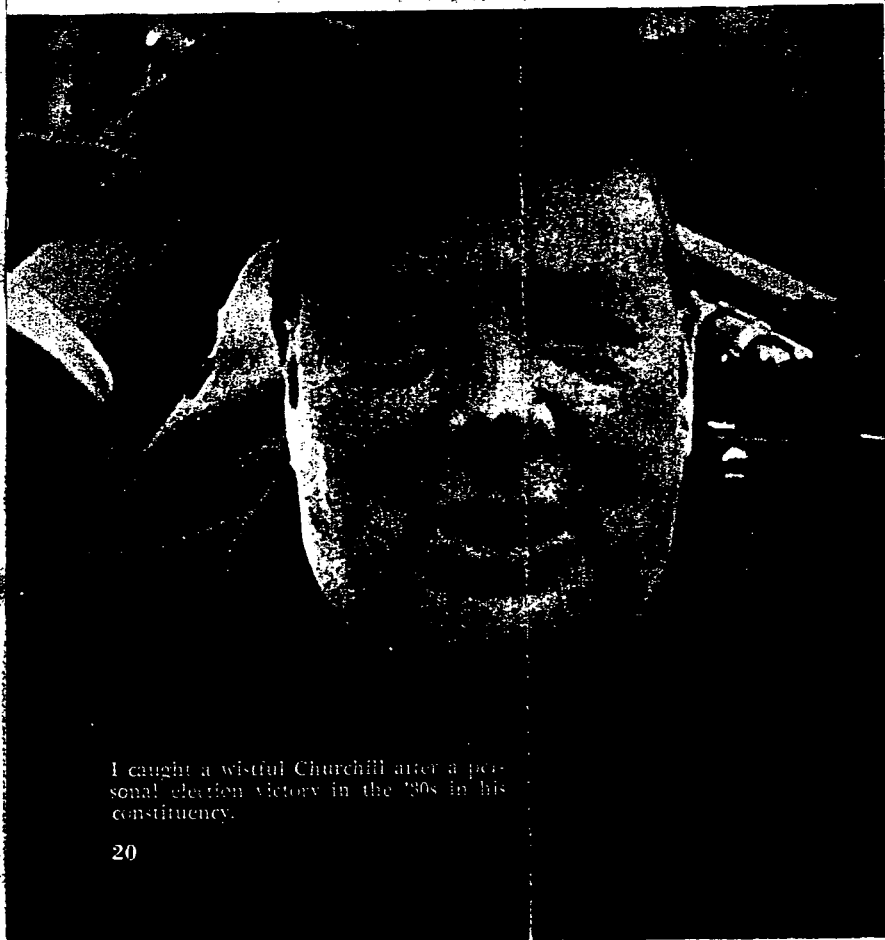
"Of course not," replied Daddy. "How else are you going to learn things?"

—Helen S. Mann

OFF-GUARD

BY LUCIEN AIGNER

■ FOR MORE THAN 25 years as a photographer I roamed three continents hunting for celebrities in off-guard moments. My purpose was not so much to discover their weaknesses—which I also had done—but to show the human being behind the pose of the public figure. Here are four pages of the best, with my comments.



I caught a wistful Churchill after a personal election victory in the '30s in his constituency.

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95-41192-7

1. The first of these is the fact that the Commission has not yet received any information from the Government of the United States regarding the activities of the Committee for the Liberation of the Americas (CLA) in the United States. The Commission is therefore unable to determine whether the CLA is a legitimate organization or a subversive one.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1861. It is a formal address, and it is the first of its kind since the signing of the Constitution. The President, James Buchanan, is addressing the Congress, and he is doing so in a very formal and dignified manner. He is discussing the state of the Union, and he is discussing the issues that are facing the country at that time. He is also discussing the role of the President, and he is discussing the responsibilities of the Congress. The letter is a very important document, and it is a very interesting one to read. It gives us a glimpse into the mind of a President, and it gives us a glimpse into the state of the country at that time. It is a document that is worth reading, and it is a document that is worth studying.

To The F. B. I.

Camden, N. J. Office
in Post Office Bldg

4th and Market Sts
Camden, N.J.

To be forwarded to
Washington, D. C. office

October 13th, 1952

Dear Sirs:-

In regards to the article that appeared in the October 1952 issue of Pageant magazine I must say that it set me to thinking seriously concerning "The Strange Case of the Cinder Lady" along the following lines;-----

We know that certain diseases very definitely raise the temperature of our bodies from the normal of 98.6° up to 112° at times, although seldom reaching the higher figure. Too, that we do not know all that there is to be known concerning diseases. Also, that it is quite possible that there might be some diseases that are as yet totally unknown to us, which fact also applies to forms of diseases. Too, I take it that the article of the "Cinder Lady" is all true fact.

So much for the known facts.

Now for the theory, thus:-

Could it be that there is some disease, or some form of cancer that is entirely unknown to us at the present time, that enters the bodies of certain people and lays there semidormant, but developing, slowly, but surely for an unknown length of time without any symptoms showing --- until, as in the cases cited in "The Strange Case of the Cinder Lady", this disease, or form of cancer is triggered off into extremely violent activity, and in its violence it raises the person's temperature to heights far in excess of anything known to us now, possibly up to 700° or 1000°, whereupon chemical reaction takes over, and raises the body temperature up to 10000° or 15000°, which would totally consume the body in a very short time.

In so doing the disease would be preying on the human body even after death and possibly even also preying upon itself, at the higher temperatures.

Then the chemical reactions within the body would not all be oxidation, but quite possibly prepare it for the oxidation taking place on the exterior, where the greater oxygen is, and the excessive temperatures therein generated so accelerating the rate of external oxidation that the body would be consumed within an hour and a half from the time that the violent activity of the disease was triggered off.

Also, as in a storage battery this chemical activity could possibly set up electrical currents, which would in circulating within the body also raise the temperature, due to the resistance of the various parts of the body.

Obviously any person so afflicted would be unconscious at 107° and certainly dead at 150°. She would obviously suffer very little, if any at all, because these temperatures have been reached and passed so very rapidly, in such a case, that there would be no chance for suffering to take place.

I feel that it would be a very excellent idea, that the next time such an event occurs, that several medical experts get on the scene immediately and have everything in the room exactly as when it occurred, and then the experts move into the building with a set of electron microscopes, a vast multitude of slides, etc. and put all soot, grease, ashes, parts, dust, etc. on the slides, all being labeled, in full detail, and preserved for then present and future examination to find out the cause, and, if possible, establish my theory. Allowing no one but the scientists to touch anything, until the scientists are through.

Who knows what might be turned up to help us in this matter, and/or other matters?

Yours Truly

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1 enclosure(s) to FBI LABORATORY, BUREAU

Newark File 95-0

Date 10/21/52

TRANSLATION FROM GERMAN

"DER TERMIN-ARTIKEL" (Term-Articles)
Technical Editorial Work for Newspapers and Magazines
Technical Lectures for Broadcasting

██████████ member of Journalist Union in Lower Saxony, #234
██████████ member of the Protective Union of German Authors, #603

Bismark Street 21
(20b) Einbeck, Germany

Einbeck, 12/10/54

USA
FBI of the USA
Washington

Mary H. Reeser
to

Re: Criminal Case Mrs. REESER, St. Petersburg, Florida.

Highly esteemed Gentlemen,

The above-mentioned case was investigated by the FBI at the time. We know, no conclusive explanation was found. Mention was made that it concerned one of those rare cases of "self-cremation" which occurred quite frequently in former centuries but which never have been explained satisfactorily.

We are planning to publish, in conjunction with noted scientists, a larger work about these mysterious self-cremations and ask you to kindly assist us with material. Of this case, we need a photograph of the woman who was burned to ashes in her room (it was produced at that time and should be in your file).

You certainly could cause, out of "love" for the matter, a copy to be made from the film. Furthermore, it is important that we have a report of the facts as well as of your own conclusions. Here, too, copies will suffice. We would be indebted to you if you could help us with our work by putting the above material at our disposal in the very near future.

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RECORDED-125

95-41172-8

7 JAN 7 1955

ORIGINAL

Scotland Yard in London, the Surete in Paris and the Federal Criminal Office in Germany have, likewise, promised us their support.

We will reimburse you for expenses involved.

Respectfully,

Technical-Authors Publishing House

[REDACTED]
(20b) Einbeck
[REDACTED]

P. S. -- Moreover, the Court Chemist in Cleveland, [REDACTED] allegedly made a compilation of cases of this type in the "Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science" a few years ago. Perhaps it would be possible to put this compilation at our disposal or perhaps it could be purchased for us over there. [REDACTED]

b7c

b7c

U.S.A.

Bundeskriminalamt der USA

Washington

9175

Mitglied des Verbandes
des Journalisten in Niedersachsen, Nr. 224

Mitglied des Schutzverbandes

Deutscher Autoren Nr. 603

(20b) EINBECK, Bismarckstraße 71 10.12.54

Telefon 206

WL/RW

Betr.: Kriminalfall Frau Reeser, St. Petersburg (Florida)
vom 1. zum 2. Juli 1951

Sehr geehrte Herren,

Der obengenannte Fall ist seinerzeit auch vom Bundeskriminalamt der USA in Washington untersucht worden. Wie uns bekannt ist, wurde eine endgültige Klärung nicht gefunden. Es wird davon gesprochen, daß es sich dabei um jene seltenen Fälle von "Selbstverbrennungen von Menschen" handelt, die in früheren Jahrhunderten sehr oft vorkamen, die aber niemals eine restlose Klärung fanden.

Wir haben die Absicht über diese mysteriösen Selbstverbrennungen im Zusammenhang mit namhaften Wissenschaftlern eine größere Arbeit herauszugeben und bitten Sie um Unterstützung mit Material. In diesem Falle benötigen wir ein Foto von der zu Asche verbrannten Frau in ihrem Zimmer (es wurde seinerzeit hergestellt und dürfte bei Ihren Akten liegen). Sicherlich können Sie der Sache zur Liebe von dem Film für uns einen Abzug herstellen lassen. Ferner wäre uns an dem Tatsachenbericht über den Fall und Ihrer eigenen Stellungnahme gelegen. Auch hier benötigten wir lediglich die Abschriften. Wir wären Ihnen sehr zu Dank verpflichtet, wenn Sie uns bei unserer Arbeit durch baldige Zurverfügungstellung obigen Materials helfen könnten.

Scotland Yard in London, die Sureté in Paris und das Bundeskriminalamt in Deutschland haben uns ebenfalls ihre Unterstützung zugesagt.

Die entstehenden Unkosten werden wir Ihnen ersetzen.

Hochachtungsvoll!
Fachschriftsteller-Verlag

(20b) Einbeck

PS. Der Gerichtschemiker in Cleveland, [redacted] vor einigen Jahren im "Journal of Criminal Law" / "Police Science", Fälle dieser Art zusammengestellt, leicht ist es möglich, uns diese Zusammenstellung zu stellen oder für uns dort zu kaufen.